May 20

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Nil Sorsky (1433-1508) monk

Today the Russian church commemorates Nil Sorsky (Nil of the Sor), a monk who led the renewal of hesychasm in fifteenth-century Russia.
Nil Maikov was born in Moscow in 1433 into an aristocratic family. At a very young age he entered the monastery of St. Cyril of the White Lake, where he became a disciple of the starets Paisius Jaroslavov.
After learning the rudiments of hesychasm, he travelled to Mount Athos and Constantinople to continue his spiritual searching in the company of the great spiritual guides of the day. He remained a long time on the Holy Mountain, where he learned the art of unceasing prayer and spiritual discernment.
After returning to the White Lake, he lived in solitude for a time, and then settled on the banks of the river Sor, not far from his monastery. There he organized a new form of monastic life, incorporating elements of both eremitical and community life according to the model of the skiti of Mount Athos.
Nil always treated his disciples, whom he liked to call "my masters and brothers," with warmth and humanity. His readiness to open the ear of his heart to God and his neighbor allowed him to recognize his own sinfulness and God's unfailing mercy, and this made him a credible witness to God's merciful love. For all Russian monks, Nil Sorskij is a powerful example of evangelical simplicity and gentleness.
During the last years of his life, Nil felt called to encourage the rebirth of a poorer, less worldly form of monasticism compared to that practiced in many of the great monastic centers of his time. He took on the leadership of a movement of sweeping monastic reform, and his candor and outspokenness inspired many monasteries to return to a radically evangelical lifestyle.
Nil Sorskij died on this day in 1508.

PRAYER

Loving God and merciful judge,
who gave Nil Sorsky the great gift
of recognizing his own sins,
grant us tears of heartfelt repentance
and infinite gratitude for that greater gift
which is your remission of all of our sins,
and which you promised and granted us
in Jesus Christ, your beloved Son
and our only Lord.

BIBLICAL READINGS

Sir 3:17-24; Mt 11:28-30

THE CHURCHES REMEMBER...

ANGLICANS:
Alcuin of York (d. 804), deacon, abbot of Tours

WESTERN CATHOLICS:
Bernardine of Siena (d. 1444), priest (Roman and Ambrosian calendars)

COPTS AND ETHIOPIANS (12 basans/genbot):
Relocation of the relics of St John Chrysostom to Constantinople (Coptic Church)
Relocation of the relics of Takla Haymanot (Ethiopian Church)

LUTHERANS:
Samuel Hebich (d. 1868), apostle in India and Ethiopia

MARONITES:
Talleleo di Egea (d. ca. 284), martyr

ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS AND GREEK CATTHOLICS:
Thalleleus of Aegea and companions, martyrs
Nil Sorsky, monk (Russian Church)
John Zedazneli (6th cent.) *and companions*, apostles of Georgia (Georgian Church)